

# TAKE A STAND FOR FREEDOM

## SOLOMON NORTHUP

Born a free man in New York State in 1808, Solomon Northup was kidnapped as a young man and sold into slavery for twelve years. His tragic story began one day in 1841 when he accepted an offer of good wages for temporary work as a violinist in New York City only to find himself drugged, chained, and locked in a slave pen in Washington, DC with all his identification papers stolen. The irony was not lost on Mr. Northup who later eloquently wrote of the incomprehensibility of being hand-cuffed and herded in silence through the streets of Washington, the “Capital of a nation, whose theory of government...rests on the foundation of man’s inalienable right to life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness.” Years later he would describe his experience of being shipped to Louisiana and sold to plantation owners as “dismal phases of a long, protracted dream.”

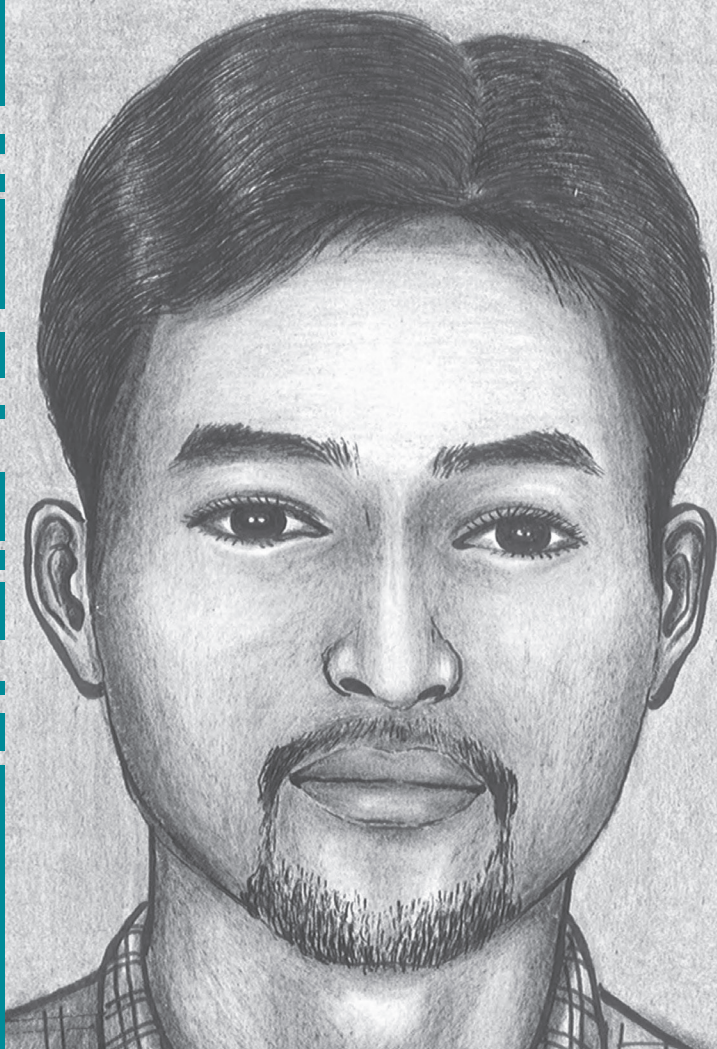
Twelve years later, Mr. Northup managed to secretly send a message to his family who enlisted the help of the New York governor in the lengthy battle to find and free him. Finally, after more than a decade of physical labor, sickness, and inhumane conditions, he was rescued. After being reunited with his wife and daughters, he took an active role in the abolitionist movement. By filing a lawsuit, he exposed the slave traders who sold him, published the acclaimed autobiography “Twelve Years a Slave” in 1853, delivered a series of public lectures, and aided fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad in Vermont.

Solomon Northup’s story still resonates today as we reflect on the significance of the 150th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and the enduring promise of freedom from all forms of modern slavery. Solomon Northup serves as an inspiration to all who believe in humanity’s inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.





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## **VANNAK ANAN PRUM**

Vannak Anan Prum was lured from Cambodia to Thailand by the promise of a lucrative job, but instead was deceived by a labor broker. He was forced to work on a Thai fishing boat from 2005 to 2009 in slave-like conditions, never receiving a salary. During this time he was mistreated, starved, and tortured. Mr. Prum escaped with another fisherman by jumping off the boat and swimming four kilometers to shore when the boat was anchored off Malaysian Borneo. According to his account, upon attempting unsuccessfully to obtain help returning to Cambodia, he was sold by corrupt officials to a palm oil plantation. After several months of forced labor on the plantation, an altercation with another worker landed him in detention. While in detention, he was able to establish contact with Malaysian and Cambodian human rights NGOs, which collaborated to have Mr. Prum repatriated to Cambodia, though not until he had spent several additional months in detention. Since then, Mr. Prum has been committed to ending human trafficking and has worked to raise awareness about labor trafficking in the Thai fishing industry through a series of drawings that recreate his experience. Mr. Prum has been interviewed about his experience and anti-human trafficking efforts by Radio Free Asia and has appeared in a human trafficking awareness video produced by MTV Exit.



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